It is sad, that in the coming of Islam, Christians felt they saw the coming of the 'fake prophet' or Anti-Christ told of in the Book of Revelation to John (New Testament). It is even sadder that the noble who organized the 2nd Crusade against the Muslims was offered a copy of a translated Koran to read - and cast it aside. It is sad because it reflects an attitude to Islam seen even until today - kept alive in the history of the Crusades, and founded on a total ignorance. It is for Muslims, now to assert their faith and for Christians to at least be willing to be made aware of the meaning of Islam. I am sure that to many Islam and its teachings will be as a mountain stream in the desert, to the parched souls of many searching for truth.

Wassalam.

Yours sincerely,

ZAHRA AZIZ (Mrs)



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NO. 5

THE TRUTH ABOUT

JESUS

BY

Dr. Maneh Hammad Al-Johani

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Quotations from the Holy QURAN

- Say: 'O People of the Book, come to common terms as between us and you: that we worship none but God; that we associate not aught with Him; and do not some of us take others as Lords, apart from God. And if they turn their backs, say: 'Bear witness that we are Muslims'. (3:64)

- They say,'God has taken to Him a son.' Glory be to Him. He is all-sufficient; to Him belongs all that is in the heavens and in the earth; you have no authority for this. Do you say concerning God what you do not know? (10:68)

- People of the Book!
  why do you disbelieve in God's signs, which you yourselves witness? (3:70)

- People of the Book!
  why do you confound the truth with falsehood and conceal the truth knowingly? (3:71)

Quatations from HADITH:

- Abu Hurairah reported Allah's Messenger (PBUH) as saying, "I am the nearest of kin to Jesus, son of Mary, in this world and the next. The prophets are brothers, sons of one father by co-wives. Their mothers are different but their religion is one. There has been no prophet between us". (Bukhari and Muslim).

- Abu Hurairah reported Allah's Messenger (PBUH) as saying,"By Him in whose hand my soul is, the son of Mary will soon descend among you as a just judge. He will break crosses, kill swine and abolish the jizya (a tax payable by a commuinty which accepts the protection of a Muslim ruler but whose members do not embrace Islam), and wealth will pour forth to such an extent that no one will accept it, and one sajda (the position in Muslim's prayer where the forehead is placed on the ground), will be better than the world and what it contains". (Bukahri and Muslim).

PREFACE

The controversy about the personality of Jesus Christ is the major difference between Islam and Christianity. This difference keeps the followers of the two religions apart. Muslims look at Jesus Christ as a great Prophet of God and love and respect him as much as they love and respect Abraham, Moses and Muhammad. Christians on the other hand consider Jesus as God or son of God, a concept that Muslims cannot accept. Islam teaches that Jesus never made such a claim for himself. As a matter of fact all the cardinal doctrines of Christianity that are rejected by Islam center around the personality of Jesus. Specifically these are:

1. The Trinity
2. The Divinity of Jesus
3. The Divine Sonship of Christ
4. Original Sin, and
5. Atonement.

It is clear that all these dogmas are the result of over-exhalting Jesus Christ above what God wants him to be. These differences focusing on the personality of Jesus have overshadowed the many similarities between Christianity and Islam. Some examples are the moral system and the emphasis on human principles. They have even over shadowed the beliefs that Muslims associate with Jesus Christ such as the Virgin Birth of Jesus, being able to speak in the cradle, performing miracles, and the second coming of Jesus Christ.

The following two articles aim at presenting a true picture of Jesus in Islam and explaining why the Christians deviated from his original teachings. The first article also indicates that many scholars and thinkers, who are still within the fold of Christianity, are gradually coming to agree with the Islamic points of view about Jesus, in many cases without realizing it. This corresponds to my conviction that the more scientific and biblical studies advance, the more they will agree with Islam. In other words, the Islamic truth is more evident with the passage of time. God in the Holy Quran hints to this in the following verse:

We shall show them our signs in the horizons and in themselves, till it is clear to them that it is the truth. (41:53)

M. J.

INTRODUCTION

The Islamic view of Jesus lies between two extremes. The Jews, who rejected Jesus as a Prophet of God, called him an impostor. The Christians on the other hand, consider him to be the son of God and worship him as such. Islam considers Jesus as one of the great Prophets of God and respects him as much as Abraham, Moses and Muhammad. This is in conformity with the Islamic point of view of the oneness of God, the oneness of Divine guidance, and the complimentary role of the subsequent messages of God's messengers. The essence of Islam, which is the willing submission to the will of God, was revealed to Adam who passed it on to his chidlren. All following revelations to Noah, Abraham, Moses, Jesus and finally Muhammad were in conformity with that message in addition to some elaboration to define the relation between Man and God, man and man, man and his environment, and to live according to God's instructions. Thus, any contradiction among revealed religions is viewed by Islam as a man-made element introduced into these religions. The position of Jesus in the three major religions: Judaism, Christianity and Islam, should not be an exception.

Although the Qur'an does not present a detailed life-account of Jesus, it highlights the important aspects of his birth, his mission, his ascension to heaven and passess judgements on the Christian beliefs concerning him.

MARY

The Qura'nic account of Jesus starts with the conception of his mother, Mary. The wife of Imran, Mary's mother, vowed to dedicate her child to the service of God in the temple. Zacharia, who took charge of Mary, used to find food with Mary. When he asked her how she got it she answered that it was from God. The Quranic verses read:

When the wife of Imran said, 'Lord, I have vowed to you, in dedication, what is within my womb. Please accept it from me, you are the Hearer and knower'. And when she gave birth to her she said, 'Lord, I have given birth to her, a female... And I have named her Mary and commend her to you with her seed, to protect them from the accursed Satan.' Her Lord received the child with gracious favour, and by His goodness she grew up comely, Zacharia taking charge of her. Whenever Zacharia went to her in the Sanctuary, he found her provisioned. 'Mary', he said, 'how comes this to you?' 'From God', she answered. Truly God provisions for whomsoever He will without reckoning. (3:35-7)

GLAD TIDINGS AND JESUS'S BIRTH

When Mary became a woman, the Holy Spirit (the Archangel Gabriel) appeared to her as a man bringing her the news of a son. We read the following dialogue in the Qur'an between Mary and the angels:

When the angels said, 'Mary, God gives you good tidings of a Word from Him whose name is Messiah Jesus, son of Mary; high honoured shall he be in this world and the next, near stationed to God. He shall speak to men in the cradle, and of age, and righteous he shall be.' 'Lord', said Mary, 'how shall I have a son seeing no mortal has touched me?' 'Even so' he said, 'God creates what He will.' When He decrees a thing He does but say to it, "Be", and it is.' (3:45-7)

Mary conceived the child miraculously and retired to a distant place where she awaited her delivery. The Qur'an in a chapter entitled 'Mary' tells us how Mary felt and what the Jews told her when she brought the child home:

She conceived him and withdrew with him to a distant place. And the birthpangs surprised her by the trunk of the palm-tree. She said, 'would I had died before this, and become a thing forgotten.' The one from below her called to her, 'Do not grieve; see, your Lord has set below you a rivulet. Shake also toward you the palmtrunk, and there shall come tumbling upon you dates fresh and ripe. Eat therefore, and drink, and be comforted; and if you should see any mortal, say, "I have vowed to the All-Merciful a fast, and today I will not speak to any man." Then she brought the child to her folk carrying him; and they said, 'Mary, you have surely committed a monstrous thing. Sister of Aaron, your father was not a wicked man, nor was your mother a woman unchaste.' Mary pointed to the child; but they said, 'How shall we speak to one who is still in the cradle, a little child?' He said, 'Lo, I am God's servant; God has given me the Book and made me a Prophet. Blessed he has made me, wherever I may be; and he has enjoined me to pray, and to give the alms, so long as I live, and likewise to cherish my mother; he has not made me arrogant or wicked. Peace be upon me, the day I was born, and the day I die, and the day I am raised up alive.' (19:22-23)

NOT THE SON OF GOD

In the same chapter, following the above quotation, God assured Muhammad and the whole world that what was mentioned above is *the truth* about Jesus although the Christians might not believe it. Jesus is not the son of God. He was, obviously enough, the son of Mary. The verses continue:

That is Jesus, son of Mary, in word of truth, concerning which they are doubting. It is not for God to take a son unto Him. Glory be to Him! When He decrees a thing, He but says to it "Be", and it is. (19:34-5)

After this strong statement about the nature of Jesus, God directed Muhammad to call the Christians to a fair deal: to worship the one God:

Surely God is my Lord, and your Lord, so serve Him. This is the straight path. (19:36).

The rejection of the idea of God having a son is reported later in the same chapter with even stronger words:

And they say, 'The All-merciful has taken unto Himself a son.' You have indeed advanced something hideous. The heavens are well nigh rent of it and the earth split asunder, and the mountains well nigh fall down crashing for that they have attributed to the All-merciful a son; and it behoves not the All-merciful to take a son. None is there in the heavens and earth but he comes to the All-merciful as a servant. (19:88-93)

The Qur'an recognizes the fact that Jesus had no human father but this does not make him the son of God or God Himself. By this criterion Adam would have been more entitled to be the son of God because he had neither a father nor a mother. So the Qur'an draws attention to the miraculous creation of both in the following verse:

Truly the likeness of Jesus, in God's sight, is as Adam's likeness; He created him of dust, then said He unto him, "Be", and he was. (3:59)

The Qur'an rejects the concept of the Trinity as strongly as it rejects the sonship of Jesus. This is because God is One. This is the essence of all monotheistic revelations. Three, by reason and by simple arithmetic, are not one. The Qur'an addresses the Christians in the following verses in the chapter entitled "Women".

People of the Book, go not beyond the bounds in your religion, and say not as to God but the Truth. The Messiah, Jesus, son of Mary, was only the Messenger of God, and His Word that He committed to Mary, and a spirit from Him. So believe in God and His Messengers, and say not, 'Three', Refrain, better is it for you. God is only One God. Glory be to Him - that He should have a son! To Him belongs all that is in the heavens and in the earth, God suffices for a guardian.

The Messiah will not disdain to be a servant of God, neither the angels who are close to Him. Whosoever disdains to serve Him and waxes proud,

He will assuredly muster them to Him, all of them.

As for the believers, who do deeds of righteousness, He will pay them their rewards in full, and He will give them more, of His bounty; as for them who disdain and wax proud, them He will punish with a severe punishment, and they shall not find for them, apart from God, a friend or helper. (4:171-3)

The verses continue to draw the attention of people, all people, to the proof which Muhammad brought. God knows that people frequently inherit certain ideas and beliefs which include, among other things, the mistakes and interpretations of previous generations. They have no way of discovering such mistakes for themselves. Thus God presents the Qur'an as a proof to such people. He says:

O men, a manifest proof has now come to you from your Lord; we have sent down to you a clear light. As for those who believe in God, and hold fast to Him, He will surely admit them to mercy from Him, and bounty, and will guide them to Him on a straight path. (4:173-5)

The denial of Jesus' divinity (and for that matter Mary's divinity) is presented in the Qur'an as a topic of dialogue at the Day of Judgement between God Almighty and Jesus. All the messengers and the nations will be gathered in front of God and He will ask the messengers how they were received by their peoples and what they said to them. Among those who are going to be questioned is Jesus:

And when God said, 'O Jesus son of Mary, did you say unto men, "Take me and my mother as gods, apart from God?" He said, 'To you be glory! IT is not mine to say what I have no right to. If I indeed said it, you knew it, knowing what is within my soul, and I do not know what is within your soul; you know the things unseen. I only said to them what you did command me: "serve God, my Lord and your Lord." And I was a witness over them, while I remained among them; but when you did take me to yourself, you were yourself the watcher over them; you are the witness of everything. If you punish them, they are your servants, if you forgive them, you are the Almighty, the All-wise.' God said, 'This is the day the truthful shall be profited by their truthfulness. For them await gardens underneath which rivers flow, therein dwelling forever, God being well-pleased with them and they well-pleased with Him; That is the mighty triumph'.

JESUS'S MISSION

Now one might ask : If the Qur'an denies the Trinity and the sonship of Jesus, what was the real mission of Jesus according to the Qur'an?

Jesus was a link in a long chain of prophets and messengers sent by God to various societies and nations whenever they needed guidance or deviated from the teachings of God. Jesus was especially prepared by God to be sent to the Jews who had deviated from the teachings of Moses and other Messengers. As he was miraculously supported by God in conception, birth and childhood, he was also supported by numerous miracles to prove that he was a messenger from God. However, the majority of the Jews rejected his ministry. The Qur'an tells us about Jesus' mission in the following verses which are a continuation of the verses quoted earlier in which the glad tiding was brought to Mary:

And He will teach him the Book, the wisdom, the Torah, the Gospel and make him a Messenger to the children of Israel saying, "I have come to you with a sign from your Lord. I will create for you out of clay as the likeness of a bird; then I will breathe into it, and it will be a bird, by the power of God. I will also heal the blind and the leper and bring to life the dead, by the power of God. I will inform you too of the things you eat, and what you treasure up in your houses. Surely in that is a sign for you if you are believers. Likewise I will confirm the truth of the Torah that is before me, and to make lawful to you certain things that before were forbidden unto you. I have come to you with a sign from your Lord; so fear God, and obey me. Surely God is my Lord and your Lord; so serve Him. This is a straight path". (3:45-51)

In another verse of the Qur'an, Jesus confirmed the validity of the Torah which was revealed to Moses and he also brought the glad tidings of the coming of a final messenger after him. This is clearly indicated in the following verse:

And when Jesus son of Mary said, 'children of Israel, I am indeed the Messenger to you, confirming the Torah that is before me, and giving good tidings of a Messenger who shall come after me, whose name shall be the praised one (note that this is translation of Ahmad which is Prophet Muhammad's name). (61:6)

The messenger of whom Jesus gave glad tidings is referred to in both the old and new testaments of the Bible. The old testament contains several prophecies that apply only to the Prophet Muhammad. I quote only one of those which applies to none except Prophet Muhammad. This prophecy which was addressed to Moses said that God will send among the 'brethren' of the Israelites, a prophet like Moses who will be a founder, a leader, and an exemplar of a community of believers. We read this in the following verses of Deut. Ch. 18:

I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their brethren;

and I will put My words in his mouth, and he shall speak to them all that I command him. And whoever will not give heed to My words which he shall speak in My name, I Myself will require it of him. (Deut 18:18-20)

Any one who is familiar with Prophet Muhammad's life, can easily see that no one fits the above description better than Prophet Muhammad. It was Prophet Muhammad, not Jesus, who like Moses was born from ordinary parents, got married, founded a faithful community, established a great law and died a natural death.

Careful study of the New Testament shows that this same prophet is referred to by Jesus in John 14:16,17:

And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Counselor, to be with you for ever, even the Spirit of truth.

Later in John specific description of this Spirit of Truth and his role is given as we read in John 16:13,14.:

When the Spirit of Truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth, for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak and he will declare to you the things that are to come. He will glorify Me...

The terms of the prophecy do not warrant the conclusion usually attributed to this prophecy, namely that it refers to the Holy Ghost. The Holy Ghost explanation is excluded by a previous verse in John which reads:

Nevertheless I tell you the truth : it is to your advantages that I go away, for if I do not go away, the counselor will not come to you.

It is clear from the Bible that the Holy Ghost used to visit men before and during the life-time of Jesus. John was filled with the Holy Ghost before he was born and Jesus himself received the Holy Ghost in the shape of a dove.

The characteristics of this counselor, as can be derived from the prophecy, are the following:

1. He will not come until Jesus leaves.
2. He will stay forever, with the believers.
3. He will glorify Jesus.
4. He will speak what he hears from God.

These characteristics are applicable only to Prophet Muhammad, as the following brief remarks show:

1. Prophet Muhammad was the only messenger that came after Jesus. There was a period of six centuries between them. Jesus' mission was limited to the "lost sheep of the children of Israel", but Muhammad's was a universal

message. This explains the second characteristic.

2. Only Prophet Muhammad's message was intended by God to be a universal and everlasting message. This agrees with the statement that the counselor will stay forever with the faithful.

3. No other prophet glorified Jesus as much as Prophet Muhammad did. The Jews called him an impostor and accused his mother of immorality. They tried to crucify him. Prophet Muhammad considered Jesus as great Prophet and the "Word of God". The Qur'an attributed to him miracles that are not mentioned in the Bible. Mary is considered the most chaste woman and the best of all women in paradise. Thus did Muhammad really glorify Jesus.

4. The fourth characteristic also applies neatly to Prophet Muhammad. The Qur'an was revealed to Prophet Muhammad through the angel Gabriel. When the angel finished reciting the Qur'an, Prophet Muhammad used to convey verbatim to his companions what he heard from the angel without adding, changing or forgetting anything. The Qur'an also describes Prophet Muhammad saying "He does not speak out of his own fancy. He utters what is revealed to him." (53:4,5). If we compare this with, "He will not speak on his own authority", we see the striking similarity between the characteristics of the counselor and those of Prophet Muhammad. These and other prophecies in the old and new testaments predict in unequivocal terms the advent of Prophet Muhammad who is rejected by the Jews and Christians on the basis of misunderstanding and bias rather than on the basis of careful study of the Bible, the Qur'an and modern findings in the field of comparative religion.

JESUS RAISED TO HEAVEN

It is a sad fact of history that not many follow "the straight path", to which people were called by Jesus. He was followed by a few disciples who were inspired by God to support him. Not only that, but the non-believers plotted (as they did to Muhammad six centuries later) to kill Jesus, but God had a better plan for him and his followers as the Qur'an tells us in the following verses:

And when Jesus perceived their unbelief, he said, 'who will be my helpers in the cause of God? The Apostles said, 'we will be helpers of God.' We believe in God; be witness of our submission. Lord, we believe in that

you have sent down, and we follow the Messenger. Inscribe us therefore with those who bear witness.' And they devised, and God devised, and God is the best of devisers. When God said, 'Jesus, I will take you to me and will raise you to Me, and I will purify you of those who do not believe. I will set your followers above the unbelievers till the Ressurrection Day. Then unto Me shall you return, and I will decide between you, as to what you were at variance on. As for the unbelievers, I will punish them with a terrible punishment in this world and the next; they shall have no helpers.' (3:52-6)

As the above verses indicate, Jesus was raised to heaven before he died. This means that according to the Qur'an he was not crucified. It was the plan of the enemies of Jesms to put him to death on the cross, but God saved him and somebody else was crucified. This plot and the false accusation of Mary are considered by the Qur'an to be some of the sins of the non-believing Jews. All this is clear in the following quotation:

And for their unbelief, and their uttering against Mary a mighty calumny, and for their saying, 'We slew the Messiah, Jesus son of Mary, the Messenger of God'... yet they did not slay him, neither crucified him, only a likeness of that was shown to them. Those who are at variance concerning him surely are in doubt regarding him, they have no knowledge of him, except the following of surmise; and they did not slay him of certainty... no indeed; God raised him up to Him; God is Almighty, All-wise. There is not one of the people of the Book but will assuredly believe in him before his death, and on the Ressurrection Day he will be a witness against them. (4:156-9)

Who was the person crucified instead of Jesus? The Qur'an does not elaborate on this point nor does it give any answer to this question. The interpreters of the Qur'an have suggested a few names. But all these are individual guesses not supported by the Qur'an or the sayings of the Prophet Muhammad.

This means that Jesus will come back before the Day of Judgement. Again the Second Coming is not clearly mentioned in the Qur'an. However, the explanators of the Qur'an understood the last verse of the above quotation: *there is not one of the people of the Book but will assuredly believe in him before his death, and on the Resurrection Day he will be a witness against them,* to mean that Jesus will come back and all the Christians and the Jews will believe in him before he dies. This understanding is supported by authentic sayings of the Prophet Muhammad.

POINTS TO BE CONSIDERED

After reading this presentation a believing Christian might say "This is what the Muslims, whom we always considered as heathens or infidels, say about Jesus." But the point of view which the Qur'an presents deserves serious consideration, to say the least, by those who are really concerned about God, faith and even Christianity itself for the following reasons:

1. The Qur'an is the last version of God's revelation and what it says is the ultimate truth. This might not mean much for those who do not believe in the Qur'an as such. However, the history of the Qur'an, modern textual criticism and scientific research of the content of this scripture leave no doubt about the truth it contains. The frequently made statements that the Qur'an is the word of Muhammad who copied his information from Jewish and Christian sources is made by people who do not know the history of the world, the Qur'an or Muhammad. The first Arabic translation of the Bible appeared two centuries ***after*** Muhammad's mission. If we add to this Muhammad's illiteracy and the scarcity of religious books in any language outside churches and temples in the sixth century we can understand the absurdity of this allegation.

2. The oneness and universality of God's message requires that people accept all the messengers of God. Rejecting one of them amounts to rejecting them all. The Jews reject Jesus's mission and Muhammad's mission; the Christians reject Muhammad's mission; whereas the Muslims accept them all, but reject incorrect historical interpretations and human elements in these missions.

3. Because of the Qur'an, Muslims love and respect Jesus as they love and respect the Prophet Muhammad. Moreover, the Qur'an reports some of Jesus's miracles which are not reported in the present gospel. For example, the Qur'an tells that Jesus spoke in the cradle and was able to tell people what they ate or treasured in their houses, to mention just a few.

4. It is common knowledge that the divinity of Jesus was introduced by Saint Paul and his followers and was established on the dead bodies of millions of Christians through history which evoked the Castillo's well-known remark "To burn a man is not to prove a doctrine."

5. The choice of the present four gospels was imposed in the conference of Nicea 325 C.E. under the auspices of the pagan Emperor Constantine for

political purposes. Literally, hundreds of gospels and religious writings were considered apocrypha, i.e. books of doubtful authenticity. Some of those books were written by Jesus's disciples. If they were not more authentic than the four gospels they were of equal authenticity. Some of them still are available such as the *Gospel of Barnabas* and the *Shepherd of Hermas* which agree with the Qur'an.

6. The Unitarian concept and the humanness of Jesus is not only held by Muslims but also by Jews and by some early groups of christianity such as the Ebionites, the Cerinthians, the Basilidians, the Capocratians and the Hypisistarians to name several early sects. The Arians, Paulicians and Goths also accepted Jesus as a prophet of God. Even in the modern age there are churches in Asia, in Africa, the Unitarian church, and *Jehova Witnesses* who do not worship Jesus as God.

7. Most serious studies of the Bible have shown that it contains a large portion of additions which neither Jesus nor the writers of the gospels said. The church, as Heinz Zahrnt said, "put words into the mouth of Jesus which he never spoke and attributed actions to him which he never performed." Those conclusions were arrived at by some members of the church. However, they are kept secret or available only to the specialists. One of those, who has shown that most of what the church says about Jesus is baseless is Rudolf Augustein in his book *Jesus Son of Man,* (published in Germany 1972 and translated into English 1977).

8. The problem with present Christianity is the personality of Jesus which is completely misunderstood. Jesus' nature, mission and claimed death and resurrection, are all challenged by studies in the field. One of those is a book entitled *The Myth of God Incarnate* which appeared 1977 (edited by John Hick) and written by seven theologian scholars in England. Their conclusion is that Jesus was "a man approved by God, for special role within the divine purpose, and..... the later conception of him as God incarnate .... is a mythological or poetic way of expressing his significance for us."

   The best George Carey could say in his attempt to refute the findings of those theologians is that unless one takes Jesus as God Incarnate one won't be able to understand Jesus' mission or explain its impact on people. This definitely is a very weak argument because all great prophets such as Abraham, Moses, and Muhammad have had a tremendous impact on people and none of them claimed that he was God or a son of God.

9. The concept of the Trinity is not, of course, available even in the present Bible. There are statements which negate it such as "The Lord our God is one Lord (Math. 12:29) and many others.

10. It is worth noting that Jesus never claims divinity even in the present text of the Bible. The expression "Son of God" cannot be said to have come from Jesus himself. Hasting in *The Dictionary of the Bible* says "Whether Jesus used it of himself is doubtful." In my reading of the Bible, I found only two instances in John Chapter 5 and 11 where Jesus uses "son of God" to refer to himself. Other instances were used by others. Even those are very limited. However, even if the title "son of God" was used by Jesus himself one should remember the following points:

a) As a biblical scholar said, "semitic usage would never have allowed literal sense even though such an expression would be interpreted literally in the Hellenistic world of Jesus followers".

b) The New Testament Greek words used for "son" are *pias* and *paida,* which means 'servant' or 'son in the sense of servant, are translated *son* in reference to Jesus and *servant* in reference to others in some translations of the Bible (Mufassir, P. 15).

c) The title "son of man" which is a self-designation of Jesus and occurs 81 times in the gospels is the clearest description and emphasis by Jesus on his humanity. The classical interpretation given to this title is that it is used to emphasize the human side of Jesus. Now the question which suggests itself is : Do contemporary Christians emphasize this aspect of Jesus?

THE POPE CONTRADICTS THE BIBLE

The traditional Biblical account of Jesus' crucifixion is that he was arrested and crucified by the orders and plans of the chief priest and Jewish elders. This account was denied in the 1960's by the highest Catholic Christian authority, the Pope. He issued a statement in which he said the Jews had nothing to do with Jesus' crucifixion. This definitely does contradict the Biblical account. You might say : This is a political decree. This agrees with what Muslims are saying: the church had introduced many elements into christianity and was influenced by many factors which made its view of christianity not only changeable but, by and large, contradict the early forms of christianity.

RELIGION VS. SCIENCE

The religious views concerning God, the Bible, and Man's relation to God which the church presented forced people into an unfortunate choice: either science or God. Most educated people have come to the conclusion that one can't be a scientist or an educated person and be a christian. Thus many philosophers, scientists and the majority of the people lost hope of reconciling religion and scinence. This unfortunate understanding later on was generalized to include every religion as a result of the inlfuence of western civilization, which was mainly christian. This whole issue would not have risen in the first place if the teachings of Jesus were not distorted or tampered with. This is because, as Islam views the matter, there is no contradiction whatsoever between religion and science. Scientific facts are just one source of our knowledge of God. The other source is revelation as it is contained in the original teachings of Jesus and in the present text of the Qur'an. Both religion and true scientific knowledge are from the same source: God. So He won't contradict Himself.

Thus, concepts like the Trinity, The Son of God, Original Sin, the Atonement etc.. which were the product of distortion and mis-understanding in the history of Christianity drove people away not only from Christianity but also from other religions, including Islam, which is not affected by these problems. This is due to the fact that many people think that because Islam is a religion (the meaning of the very word is limited in western languages) it must be similar to Christianity. Very few people will have the interest and the ability to discover the falsehood of this assumption.

EVIDENCES FOR THE QUR'ANIC ACCOUNT

This implicit assumption is one of the causes of hesitation and unwillingness of many people to accept the Qur'anic view of Jesus. This is in spite of the fact that this point of view is supported by:

a) The early history of Christianity which continued for three decades after Jesus's disappearance as a sect within Judaism.

b) The practice of many Christian sects and scholars throughout the history of Christianity.

c) The findings of many Biblical scholars and scientific research which was applied to the Bible.

d) The instinct of many people (some of whom think they are Christians) who believe in the One God, but can't accept Jesus as God or The Son of God.

It is worth noting that the main differences between the Qur'anic account and what modern research and scholars have found is that the Qur'an said what it says now about Jesus and his mission fourteen centuries ago and never changed its stand.

REASONS HOLDING PEOPLE FROM ISLAM

Some of the other reasons which might account for the rejection of the Qur'anic account include:

a) *The time-honored bias* against Islam which was partly the product of the Crusades and partly the product of the Arab-Israeli conflict in the Middle East.

b) *Confusion.* Many people although they do not accept Christianity, do not know where the truth is.

c) *Social Pressure and Academic Reputation.* Many people were afraid to accept Islam because they felt they would be mocked, alienated from their relatives and peers if they openly rejected Christianity and accepted Islam. At the academic level, especially among orientalists, if one writes favourably about Islam and the Qur'an no body will review his work, quote from it or even consider it a scholarly work. He could be even destroyed professionally. *The Washington Post* (January 5, 1978) reported that a University of Richmond Professor, Dr. Robert Alley lost the chairmanship of the Department of Religion there because he holds the view that Jesus never claimed to be the son of God. After considerable research into newly found ancient documents, Dr. Alley concluded that:

The (Bible) passages where Jesus talks about the son of God are later additions..... what the church said about him. Such a claim of deity for himself would not have been consistent with his entire life-style as we can reconstruct. For the first three decades after Jesus' death Christianity continued as a sect within Judaism. The first three decades of its existence of the church were within the synagogue. That would have been beyond belief if they (the followers) had boldly proclaimed the deity of Jesus.

ISLAM : THE NATURAL CALL

Despite these factors, and some others which I did not mention, there have been many people who have submitted to truth. The Islamic point of view about Jesus and other major issues strikes those who get introduced to it as something which makes a lot of sense and something which they hold implicitly without knowing it. This, and other characteristics made Islam the fastest growing religion in the world throughout history. It appeals even to faithful Christians because they discover that:

a) Islam does not abolish Jesus, it rather puts him in the right position in the long line of men who brought real salvation to humanity. In reality they are adding a new dimension to their understanding of God, prophet-hood, and revelation.

b) When Christianity and Judaism (or for that matter any religion) are looked at from the Islamic perspective they fit in neatly in the universal framework of the oneness of God and His plans for mankind. Moreover, one will understand clearly why there are some gaps or discrepancies in the Biblical account about certain issues.

c) Islam does consider itself the final link in the long chain of revelation. It promises the followers of previous faiths great rewards if they add belief in Islam to their belief in their previous faith. The Prophet Muhammad said, "He who has believed in his religion then believed in what is revealed to me will be rewarded twice (by God)." That is once for believing in his faith and the other for recognizing truth and believing in Islam.

To sum up, Islam considers Jesus as one of God's great prophets. His mission was to preach the Oneness of God and to lead man to his Lord. He never claimed to be other than a servant and a Messenger of God. The Qur'anic account of his life and mission is supported by overwhelming evidence. The Muslims do believe in and are awaiting the Second Coming of Jesus. He will come back not as God to judge the non-christians, but as Jesus, God's servant. His coming is to correct the misconception which people have developed about his personality and his mission. According to a saying of the Prophet Muhammad, he will stay for forty years which is going to be the happiest years of life on this earth. At that time everybody will beleive in him as the messenger, not the Son of God. However, what about those who will not be able to live till his second coming? They better do it now!

FURTHER READINGS ON ISLAM AND CHRISTIANITY

M. M. Pickthall, *The Meaning of the Glorious Qur'an*
T. B. Irving, et al., *The Qur'an : Basic Teachings*
Hamuda Abdulati, *Islam in Focus*
M. Qutb, *Islam : The Misunderstood Religion*
B. A. Bawany, *Islam : The First and Final Religion*
Maurice Bucaille, *The Bible, THe Qur'an and Science*
Maurice Bucaille, *The Origin of Man*
Lordsale and Laura Ragg, *The Gospel of Barnabas*
Muhammad Ata-ur-Rahman, *Jesus : A Prophet of Islam*
Rudolf Augustein, *Jesus Son of Man*
John Hick (ed), *The Myth of God Incarnate*
S. S. Mufassir, *Jesus in the Qur'an.*

Some of these books and others about Islam can be obtained from:

World Assembly of Muslim Youth (WAMY)
P. O. Box 10845
Tel. (01)4641663
Riyadh 11443, Saudi Arabia

Or the nearest Islamic Center in your part of the world.

INTRODUCTION

The Islamic account of Jesus's life and mission is quite reasonable and puts Jesus in his right place among the great messengers of God to humanity. Although the Islamic view of Jesus agrees with what many people instinctively think, it is sometimes rejected because this is what Islam says about him. However, those who come to Islam with an open mind and free from bias will submit to the logic and believability of the Islamic account of Jesus. The Islamic position is especially appreciated by those who have struggled with the various Christian dogmas that are centered around the personality of Jesus Christ.

The following is a letter which I received from one of the viewers who follow my program: ISLAM IN PERSPECTIVE, televised by the Saudi Arabian Television, Second Channel. It is a response to a two-episode discussion of Jesus called: JESUS IN ISLAM. I include this letter here for the following reasons:

1. The writer is an expert on this topic as a student of religion and an objective seeker of truth.

2. The writer was a believing Christian who knows Christians' feelings and belief concerning Jesus Christ.

3. The writer's explanation of how the Christians deviated from Jesus' instructions and mission is quite plausible and accounts for the present Christian belief about Jesus.

I would like to thank the writer for her kind permission to include her letter in this publication.

M. J.

WHY DO CHRISTIANS CLAIM THAT JESUS IS THE SON OF GOD?

Dear sir,
Assalamo Alaikum Wa Rahmatullah
OPINION REGARDING THE DISCUSSION ON YOUR PROGRAM

I was very interested in your discussion on TV since this is a topic which I have discussed many times, both as student of religion, and outside the learning environment, in many parts of the world.

As an English Muslim convert, now living in Saudi Arabia, I find the sharp contrast between societies, thought-provoking from many new points.

Focussing upon the nature of Jesus and Mary as explained in the Koran, and in the Gospel of the New Testament, we see two opposing views - that of Christian teaching that Jesus is 'Son of God' and that of the Koran neglecting all such claims. It then, becomes necessary to ask the question WHY was it necessary for the early Christians to make such a claim about Jesus, when after all he never made any such claim himself?

It is my opinion that answer becomes clear if we study the basis for the religions of Islam and Christianity. As Muslims we base our faith upon God and upon Him alone, and upon the Koran - God's word to His Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) in whom we also believe - as a true Prophet of the one God. Muhammad (PBUH) is God's servant, - faithful and obedient and totally human - he remains the instrument of God's purpose to lead His people back to Him again.

Now, as a total contrast we turn to Christianity - a religion built not around God, or His book - for there *was* no 'book' until 150 years after Jesus' death. Christianity became built around the personality of Jesus himself. By laying more and more stress upon the magnetic and wonderful personality of Jesus and unable and un-willing to describe the Prophet's effect upon all who came to him in everyday terms - more and more attributes are added to his reputation - a man who could perform miracles, bring back the dead to life, heal the leper, cure the blind - all by God's will, is indeed a wonderful man - blessed by God - born by God's will to do His service. But after his death, the 'magical' personality must be kept alive and 'Son of God' appears to suitably qualify all his actions.

Living in a society, strongly flavoured by the Greco-Roman gods, all 'super human,' the educated early Christians must surely also have been influenced in thought by their surroundings. Paul himself, one of the great teachers of

Christianity, was a Hellenized Jew, who never saw or met Jesus during his lifetime. Yet many of his reported sayings show the influence of the times in which he lived. 'The Living Lord' was very real to him.

The miraculous nature of Jesus' birth, also could help to give credence to the idea of Jesus identity as son of God. But it is child-like in its $1+1=2$ type philosophy, i.e., God blew into the womb of Mary - Mary had Jesus, therefore God is Jesus' father and Jesus is His son.

What Christians fail to see, and to understand is that in Jesus' birth and conception we see a touching and wonderful revelation of the Kindness of God.

We are told by both Koran and Christian writings that Mary was a young woman of exceptional purity of both mind and body, brought into the world already pledged as God's servant, blessed by God, while in His service in the synagogue so that she herself could produce small 'miraculous' occurrences by God's will. How natural then, that God, having chosen her to be the vehicle by which His new Prophet should be born on earth - chooses a means by which none of her blessed purity is touched. She serves her God, but in so doing He in His infinite kindness preserves her precious purity. Surely this needs no embellishment - no claims to 'Sonship' of God. God's creation yes, but not Son by Paternity. That is obviously not the intention.

The fact that so much time elapsed before any of the sayings of Jesus or his teachings were written, also allows for the "Oral tradition', by which they were passed on, to have substantially changed the original. And yet through the three synoptic gospels (John being written last and obviously full of religious dogma) Mathew, Luke and Mark despite any alteration - a picture of Jesus as a quiet, yet magnetic personality - a Prophet inspired by God, with a great love of ***all*** humanity, sent to sharpen out awareness of God, in all the aspects of life; Jesus tries to open our eyes and our hearts to a greater awareness of God - an unselfish appraisal of ourselves from our thoughts, to our actions, and to enlarge Faith and Trust in God. Only by so doing by the simple Faith and Trust of a child is God's Kingdom to come on Earth - this idea is repeated many times in many of his reported sayings. His closeness to God was evident from the strength that he drew from prayers, and the power he was given by God, to perform miracles. Yet in all this power and in the performance of God's wonders NEVER does he proclaim himself Son of God. In Jesus sense of the word 'Son" we are all children of God, His sons and daughters, here on earth, and as such Jesus taught the people to pray to 'Our Father, which art in Heaven'.

Of the actual volume of words he spoke or must have spoken in his teachings only a pitiable few, and not all reliable, have been recorded. Jesus

seemed to be primarily concerned with the poor, the oppressed, the outcast, the sick - and not tolerant of the sanctimonious and meaningless religious 'cant' of the so-called "pious." His call was to the hearts of men, and his theme was humanity and love. Did he mean to establish a church? I believe he did - but not in the sense we see the church today - Jesus was practical as well as spiritual. I believe he wanted to create a society of people whose Faith in God bound them to one another regardless of race or creed, in a family-type caring relationship under God's guidance. It is not really evident from his teachings that he saw himself as a great shining light in this process. He tended more to regard himself as a tool in the hands of God.

By raising him up to unbelievable heights, the early Christian followers brought upon themselves the endless problems of theoretically explaining the crucifixion - and from this comes the doctrine of the suffering servants, raised from the Jewish ancient texts - spoken of in Isaiah, the doctrine of Sacrifice for the sins of man, and the consequential exclusiveness of Jesus - which is very important to the early Christians. A pagan could be equally faithful to many 'gods' - but in Christianity this could not be - ONLY by faith in Jesus can the Christian hope to gain salvation - ONLY by accepting his death for the sake of man's sin - and ONLY by belief in his resurrection (for as son of God, God must lift him up again) can the Christian hope to gain Paradise. Any other path is death - although this places Jesus absolutely between God and His people - a position he never occupied in his life on Earth.

Doctrine on doctrine becomes intertwined, and we find in the history of the church, endless meetings, theories and arguments as to the Nature of Jesus - he has become now, in fact, less a tangible reality, and more an unearthly semi-spiritual being, wrapped in endless doctrine and dogma - far indeed from the simple, gentle personality, in whom God placed so much power, in order that he could bring awareness to His people. Has not the church then defeated Jesus' own objective - simplicity?

We find in the "Trinity" - Father - Son-and Holy Ghost, perhaps the culmination of the efforts of people struggling for a 'Supremacy' in religious expression and achieving an enigma, few Christians can adequately explain today.

God's spirit is as real in the days of Moses and Abraham as it is in the time of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). It does not need to be held in the confines of a "man-made" triangle. Nor did Jesus associate himself with any theory of this kind.

إنجليزي

The truth about Jesus

by

Dr. Maneh AL-Johani

حقيقة المسيح

تأليف د. مانع الجهني

دار الخير